

# Parking

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A hand holding a black car key fob with three buttons (lock, unlock, trunk) is in the foreground. In the background, a woman with curly hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. The scene is set inside a car, with the steering wheel and dashboard visible.

VALETS: YOUR  
CUSTOMER'S

# First Impression

FORMED THROUGH  
THE WINDSHIELD

*Valet uniforms must be distinctive and give the guest confidence that they are entrusting their car to the right team.*

What does your valet branding say to customers as they drive up to the curb? Any impressions made — positive or negative — are coming at a crucial connection point for arriving guests.

Even from 50 feet away, a sweat-soaked attendant in an ill-fitting shirt reflects poorly on the valet system as well as the building or venue.

### **Do Uniforms Really Make a Difference?**

Eye-catching uniforms are often punctuated by an embroidered logo. Some have “valet” emblazoned across the shirt, often in a reflective material.

Others adopt a militaristic, authoritative quality in the form of epaulettes, cargo pockets, gold buttons, and detailed trim on the collar and sleeve cuffs.

Then there is the ubiquitous polo shirt. Offering a uniform look across the front drive, it is easily embroidered and available in a multitude of colors.

And yet, for all the differences in the uniforms themselves, their effect on the front drive is remarkably similar. They imbue structure, professionalism, and consistency.

When a customer has only a moment to gauge

a valet’s trustworthiness, the well-attired attendant has a decided leg up. Why? Customers form first and lasting impressions through the windshield.

### **Uniforms Define Image**

Perception aside, uniforms engender an esprit de corps within the workforce. Valet staff are proud to feel part of a larger, professional group.

Uniforms set a unified image. From a safety and efficiency perspective, they can easily identify one another and can be easily identified by motorists.

Repeated visibility of a valet operator’s logo offers the valet company prolonged exposure — first on the valet ramp and then wherever employees go following their shifts. Logo-identifiable shirts become walking billboards, even recruitment tools.

Sharp uniforms also contribute to heightened employee-retention rates, a significant factor in an industry noted for high turnover.

### **Asking the Right Questions**

When it comes to acquiring uniforms, valet managers face a myriad of questions:



*“When a customer has only a moment to gauge a valet’s trustworthiness, the well-attired attendant has a decided leg up.”*

Which style best suits their needs? Which garments are most durable? Which are more comfortable? Will the same garments be readily available in the future? What about delivery times?

Style-wise, most valet companies adopt one of two design directions: a loose-fitting, untucked, button-down shirt or a high-performance polo shirt. These are paired with matching pants or shorts as weather and formality dictates.

When possible, the garments should reflect the mood or branding of

the property. If the valet garments are used across multiple properties, an understated look works best to avoid clashing with brightly themed property.

### **Options Tailored to Environment**

When buying from a custom manufacturer, the designs, fabrics, and colors can seem endless. Options include everything from antimicrobial and snag-proof fabrics to ornate embroidery.

Today’s breathable moisture-wicking fabrics pull moisture away from the skin. If staying cool is key,



consider mesh underarm gussets and back or side vents.

For easy mobility, select garments with plenty of stretch. If exposure to the sun is a concern, request fabrics pre-treated with a UV-inhibiting ingredient or featuring a special weave structure or denier.

### Uniforms and Seasons

For spring and summer wearables, consider lightweight tropical microfibers with wicking technology. Uniform staples for fall and winter include quilted garments and warm fabrics such as wool.

With a name that belies its slender profile, the 3-in-1 jacket is a winter favorite. It features a waterproof outer shell, an insulated inner jacket, and a zippered combination of both. Topping off the look is a detachable hood.

### An Integrated Look

For a fully integrated look, it's helpful to work with a uniform purveyor capable of supplying everything from name tags and

carabiners to beanies and gloves. This assures a coordinated look across your uniform program.

Looks aside, these accompanying items are essential in their own right. Take tactical, form-fitting fleece gloves. Outfitted with these gloves, your staff is ready to brave hazardous working conditions and inclement weather.

### Speed to Market

Though in-stock uniforms will get a valet operator up and running quickly, they do so without the distinction of custom uniforms. While the in-stock garment is reliable and predictable, the custom garment exudes exclusivity.

With in-stock uniforms, a stylized collection can be turned around in less than two weeks. However, custom garments may take a couple of weeks for the design phase and as long as eight weeks for custom sewing.

If uncommon fabrics and trims are needed, sourcing

them may add to your turn-around time.

### Designing Uniforms

Garments should be selected with individual job functions in mind. Work performed in hot and humid conditions calls for breathable, moisture-wicking fabrics. Employees who routinely sprint across a parking garage benefit from pants that are not binding.

Safety is also key: For the valet who works in a dimly lit area, a shirt with reflective stripes may be a lifesaver.

### Don't Forget Durability

Today's long-lasting, high-performance polyester polos are comfortable and available with reflective piping. If a desired polo is not available with reflective trim, your uniform supplier should be able to apply the trim to your exact specifications.

Though comfortable, garments made of 100 percent cotton may fade unless colorfastness and fade resistance is ensured by premium dyes. Cotton shirts may also shrink unless the cotton is preshrunk.

### Be Aware of Bargains

Tempting as it is to rummage the likes of Amazon for uniforms, you're likely to find discontinued or close-out garments. That means the exact garment you purchase is unlikely to be available from year to year.

While cost effective at the first purchase, it may be challenging to replenish your stock with a consistent look. Additionally, returns may prove difficult and customer service limited.

To ensure an effortless uniform program, it's best to work with a uniform purveyor capable of keeping adequate inventory on hand. This will allow for the timely replenishment of garments.

### Select a Long-Term Partner

It's also worth looking for a uniform company with in-house silk-screening and heat-transferring capabilities. When combined with in-house sewing and embroidery, these prove invaluable during inevitable, last-minute modifications.

So, too, does working with someone who has the disposition to take on last-minute challenges. In finding a dependable uniform partner, you jettison an administrative chore and gain a helping hand.

When it's all hands on deck, a reliable uniform supplier is one hand you'll be grateful to have. ■



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